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ABSTRACT

Received Pronunciation (RP) has traditionally been presented as a teaching model in Nigeria though performance has not measured up to expectation. In recent years, there has been much confusion regarding the choice of an English teaching model in developing countries, especially since the emergence of local varieties. On the one hand, experts complain that these varieties are low in intelligibility. On the other hand, it is suggested that native-speaker models need not be taught in countries where English is a second rather than a foreign language. However, in practice, there are no authoritative descriptions of local varieties or any pedagogical manuals based on them. Also, research evidence indicates that educated Nigerians have a preference for native-like competence in spite of their fear of ridicule from their peers. Received pronunciation remains the only realistic option for its several advantages. Suggestions are made as to how the English teaching profession in Nigeria can play a more effective role in improving standards. (Author)

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Conference Theme: 'Realism' and/or 'Reality' in the Foreign or Second-Language Class

"Is Nigerian English a Realistic Model to Teach?"

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Introduction

> Experience suggests that the teacher of English must set his targets higher than the achievement of an African variety of English. For in teaching speech as in almost any other human activity, we tend to fall below the targets that we set ourselves. There is a danger that if we fall below an acceptable African variant of English we shall fall below a minimum acceptable standard and produce English which is not internationally intelligible. (McGregor, 1971: 133)

McGregor's suggestion would seem to be the most realistic statement to come out of Africa in the last decade and perhaps the most useful to the classroom teacher of pronunciation. It is difficult to know exactly what every teacher of English in Africa does when he is alone with his students, but one thing is clear. After eleven years of primary and secondary education often after four or five additional years of university education, our students still fail to master the sounds of Received Pronunciation (RP). Is this an unrealistic goal?

In recent years, especially with the growth of local varieties of English in the developing nations, experts have advocated the use of such varieties for classroom teaching. (See, for example, Peter Strevens (1980), Broughton and others (1978).) Several writers have become quite apologetic with regard to the use of RP as a teaching model. These would seem to be quite unrealistic to the present speaker, especially where local varieties of English have not been adequately described for pedagogical purposes.

Often the mere emergence of local varieties of English is discussed with much enthusiasm as if it is a significant achievement. Over the last decade, for example, from Bamgbose (1971) to Odumuh (1981), one Nigerian expert on English teaching after another has found it necessary to assert the emergence of Nigerian English. Ubahakwe (1979) devotes the conference papers of two consecutive years to it. At the same time, there have also been corresponding observations by outsiders regarding the low intelligibility of African, or more specifically, Nigerian English. Strevens (1965: 117), (Gower, 1967: 14), and Gimson (1981: 65) have expressed this. Gimson, for example, noted that "in Africa, the efficiency of spoken English as an international means of communication appears to be declining. Here we have interference from the tonal nature of so many of the indigenous languages, as well as deformed pronunciation of English arising from incorrect rhythm and the related inability to weaken

the quality of unaccented syllables." Brian Tiffen's (1974) study of the intelligibility of Nigerian English provides specific data. Using 240 British listeners as judges of twenty-four recorded Nigerian first year undergraduates, he found that the intelligibility of Nigerian English ranged from 92.7 to 29.9 percent with a mean of 64.4 percent. An additional interesting finding was the marked variation in intelligibility across the language background of the subjects. "10 of the 12 Hausa speakers scored above the mean, while 9 of the 12 Yoruba speakers scored below the mean, indicating the Hausa speakers are significantly more intelligible than Yoruba speakers." (Tiffen, 1974: 178).

From all of the foregoing, it would, therefore, seem pedagogically inappropriate to present such local varieties as teaching models as a matter of overt policy. We cannot arrive at international intelligibility by focusing teaching strictly on them.

1.0 Aims of Teaching Spoken English in Nigeria

Because of the dual roles that any individual plays in a normal communicative situation, i.e. those of a hearer and possibly a speaker also, the aims of teaching spoken English would be twofold:

(a) to develop receptive competence or comprehension of English speech and

(b) to develop productive competence, i.e. the ability to initiate discourse or to respond to one.

Whenever the question of what variety to teach has been raised, emphasis has been on what the locality should speak and hardly anything on the receptive or listening comprehension demands that are made on it, e.g. by RP speakers in person as residents of the community or in the mass media such as the radio and television. Incidentally, these include Americans, Canadians, Irish and Europeans with varying degrees of competence in English as well. Adeyanju (1977: 10-11), for example, found that Nigerian children in international schools in the North spent as much as 3.2 hours (about half of the school day) watching television programmes daily. Fourteen (34.1%) of the forty-one programmes watched were British, while 16 (39%) were American. English teaching must provide for such "consumer ability" through practice in comprehending RP sounds, if not General American. It is in this sense, that a local variety would be quite inadequate. It would also be necessary to modify the traditional approach to pronunciation teaching centred on the consonant and vowel. It is quite realistic to teach the accentual features of RP, even if only to ensure receptive competence.

2.0 English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language

In differentiating between the learning of English in a situation where it is a foreign language from one in which it is a second language, Jack Richards (1979: 107) makes the following observation:

> There are basic motivational differences. In a foreign language setting there is always an effort to acquire an overseas standard form of English, and not some local form of English. Hence Japanese, Russians, Germans, etc are bilingual in the popular sense when they cannot be distinguished from native speakers of English by their uses of the language, though no such demands are made in the case of English as a second language, where local varieties are accepted as Standards. These motivational differences are reflected in the course books in use of foreign language and second language settings. (Underlining mine)

Peter Strevens (1980) and Broughton and others (1978), to mention just a few, also make the same point. It is difficult to trace the origin of this myth. For example, the distinction has never been true of Nigeria and indeed Anglophone West Africa where English is a second language. From the beginning, the only model placed before teachers and pupils has always been the RP model, and this is still reflected in all of the textbooks in use in schools. What is readily noticeable is that achievement is quite varied. In Northern Nigeria where for a long while there were adequately trained native speakers, some impressive RP speakers were produced, especially in such outstanding schools as Katsina, Kaduna and Zaria government colleges. Much less success was attained in the South. (Jibril, 1979).[1]

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[1] There is also the greater impact of pidgin English in the South as well as a general lack of empathic attitude to the British.

Often uncertain of their ability, non-native teachers have either presented the RP model cursorily or even avoided such sentence features as rhythm, stress, intonation, assimilation and weak forms completely. Also, unlike in several European countries where Contrastive Analysis projects and other Resource Centres have been established through governmental support to aid the effective teaching of English, English language teaching has never benefited from any active centralized agency. It is from such adverse background that the varieties of spoken English in Nigeria, should be understood rather than that of a deliberate policy to teach anything else other than a native speaker model of English.[1] A genuine concern for improved intelligibility of Nigerian English would entail insisting that RP be presented more effectively, especially in teacher training colleges and the universities.

3.0 Varieties of English Preferred by Nigerians

In recent years, attempts have been made to elicit from Nigerians the variety of English they liked best of all. Pai Obanya and others (1979) carried out an acceptability study in which, among

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[1] For more on the motion of mother tongue based Englishes in Nigeria, see Ekpeyong, 1965; Kirk Greene, 1971; and Irondi; 1980.

other things, they sought to find out "which of the selected samples of competing varieties of Nigerian spoken English would be most acceptable to a selected group of Nigerian listeners." The researcher found that "on the average the subjects tended to accept a native sspeakers accent more readily than that of a near-native Nigerian speaker," and that "teachers of English tended to accept the native and near-native accents more readily than non-teachers of English." The study is, however, defective on certain ground , the most obvious being that about 83% of the subjects (165 out of 199) were from one ethnic group, the Yoruba. Nine out of the twelve Yoruba subjects in an earlier study by Brian Tiffen (1974) had been found to be below the Nigerian norm in intelligibility. Pai and others' (1979) results may perhaps at best be regarded as inconclusive.

David Williams' (1981) small-scale study sought to shed some light on the question of intelligibility of various types of English accent spoken by Nigerians from different ethnic groups. Fourteen informants comprising eleven Nigerians from five different language groups and three native speakers from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada respectively were recorded. The Nigerian informants were classified into "near-native" speakers of English, "accented Nigerians," and "heavily accented." Eighty-one English teacher trainees from thirty-six different Nigerian language

backgrounds rated the fourteen informants for acceptability on cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. "With just a few exceptions the results revealed a pattern of acceptability very much in favour of the native and near-native accents." The term "near-native" was used in the study to mean "recognizably Nigerian, not neutral, and certainly neither British nor American." It approximated "closely to standard British English with RP phonological deep structure and Nigerian surface structure." One shortcoming in the use of Nigerians as judges of intelligibility or acceptability, even where English is their subject of study, is that there can be only as much confidence in the evaluation as their own limitations in the language permit. The higher their attainments in English, the more reliable their judgement is likely to be.

In order to determine the attitudes of Nigerians to the varieties of English in the country, the present speaker used open-ended questionnaires to find out, among other things, the subjects' aspirations with respect to spoken English and what advantages they thought they would derive from such aspirations. They were also required to state what difficulties they thought they would come up against in striving towards their chosen model. Sixty-four Bachelor of Education in Language Arts students in their first and second years of the two-year degree course were involved in the study.

Of these, 57.8% were male and 42.2% were female. Twenty-five different patterns of bilingual backgrounds ranging from English and one Nigerian language, e.g. Hausa or Igbo to English and seven Nigerian languages. The subjects' responses to the question of which of the suggested variety of English they would like to attain revealed the following choices.

Table 1: Preferred Varieties of English
N = 64

	Variety of English	Response	%
1.	Native speaker ability (RP)	4	6.3
2.	Near native ability (RP)	30	46.9
3.	Nigerian English	14	21.9
4.	American English	0	0
5.	International English	16	25.0
6.	Any other	0	0
	Total	64	100.0

Over 78% of the respondents preferred native speaker, near-native speaker, and international varieties of English to Nigerian English.[1]

[1] American English has never been an English tradition in Nigeria, though thousands of Americans have always lived here.

Clearly, the subjects excluded near-native and international English varieties from main-stream Nigerian English, even though this need not be so. Their response would seem to confirm both Pai and others' (1979) and Williams' (1981) findings.

The subjects were also asked to say what difficulties they would have if they were to strive towards speaking English like native speakers. Table 2 summaries their responses.

Table 2 Problems in Attaining Native Speaker Ability

N(number of Responses) = 111

Problems	Responses	%
1. Interference	12	10.8
2. Pronunciation	28	25.2
3. Lack of a model	8	7.2
4. Accent	18	16.2
5. Stress	7	6.3
6. Speed	1	.9
7. Absence of a language laboratory	1	.9
8. Cultural background	4	3.6
9. Uninterested in it	2	1.8
10. Do not have the time	1	.9
11. Will not be understood	1	.9
12. May not attain it	1	.9
13. Mockery from friends	27	24.3
Total	111	99.9

Purely phonological problems as cited in items 1-6 as well as the absence of the language laboratory (7) to aid learning account for over 67% of the difficulties in attaining native speaker ability. Problems (9) - (13) are purely affective, being either individual or social. Among these latter problems, undoubtedly, the fear of mockery (24.3%) from their "friends" is cause for much concern to these teacher trainees. It partly explains why some of the respondents in the study may not strive towards a model of English they admire.and poses a problem to any efforts teacher educators may make towards improving teacher quality.

Obviously, there is some confusion in Nigeria as to what should be mocked at, but this is readily understood if it is remembered that perhaps less than 20% of the population is literate in English and low-level performance in English among the literate is the rule rather than the exception. As Nigerians become better educated, mockery arising from infericrity complex will disappear. It is interesting to note that the reaction to competence is the exact opposite in the developed countries, that is, it is inability to speak "properly" or competently that may invite ridicule. Broughton and others (1978: 253), for example, argue for native speaker insight on the part of the non-native learner and suggest the need for:

> that faculty whereby a non-native speaker in an English or English-type environment uses the (English) language with such approximation to native-speaker norms that offence, ridicule, or misrepresentation do not occur.

When the subjects were asked to state the advantages of speaking like a native speaker, they cited the following:

1. It makes for easier international intelligibility and acceptability (45%)
2. You command respect and recognition both locally and among native speakers. (16.7%)
3. You can communicate widely at the national level. (6.7%)
4. RP is an advantage for a good job with the TV and Radio stations. (6.7%)
5. You are accepted by native speakers. (6.7%)
6. You develop receptive and productive competence and become a good model. (5%)
7. You are saved from any embarrassment abroad. Instead, you acquire confidence and pride. (5%)
8. You are accepted by native speakers and are free to interact with them. (3.3%)
9. Less effort is needed in saying what you want to say. (1.5%)

10. You are saved the embarrassment of giving away your identity (i.e. tribal identify often easily traceable in Nigerian English). (1.7%)

Over 98% of the subjects were highly positively-oriented towards native speaker ability in English, seeing it as very worthwhile. A negligible 1.7% respondents still cited ridicule as a disadvantage. They feared that one would be described as a "been to," i.e. one who has lived in Britain or North America and has taken on some of the speech characteristics of those countries. In general, the responses here suggest that educators are likely to find trainees' language ego more permeable if they concentrate on emphasing the advantages of native speaker ability for motivational effect.

4.0 Language Policy

The problem of choosing a pedagogical model of English in Nigeria should perhaps be seen as part of an overall package of an ongoing process of language policy formulation. At the surface level, Nigerians have had to choose English as their national language because of the existence of over 400 languages, from which it was difficult to make a choice and partly because of a well-established English language tradition. At the deep structure level, for decades Nigerians have been presented with an RP variety of English

for pedagogical purposes which a large majority have not always mastered for many reasons, some of which are:

1. the inability of the educational system to handle interference problems from the mother tongue;
2. the absence of adequately educated and well trained English teachers;
3. the influx of other varieties of English e.g. American, Canadian, Irish, Indian, Pakistani, etc. and
4. an attitude that is readily satisfied with low-level attainment.

It is the outcome of these cumulative deficiencies that is being gradiosely referred to as Nigerian English. Needless to say, this is a source of embarrassment and anxiety among some English teacher educators. Professor Tomori (1978) of Ibadan, for example, argues that "if we do not aim at native speaker competence in overseas universities the English language will become unrecognizable at lower levels of education." I believe qualitative ~~teaching by a~~ much better educated and trained corps of teachers must begin at a much lower level than the university before the on-set of fossilized phonological speech habits. The importance of teachers in this regard can hardly be overemphasized and the best expression of this is perhaps to be found in (Gimson, 1980: 304).

> The foreign teacher of English constitutes a special case. He has the obligation to present his students with as faithful model of English pronunciation as possible. In the first place, and particularly if he is dealing with young pupils, his students will imitate a bad pronunciation as exactly as they will a good one; and secondly, if he is using illustrative recorded material, his own pronunciation must not diverge markedly from the native model.

Any other variety of English will be chosen only on the condition that it will achieve better results, especially intelligibility and not simply on the propagandistic grounds of linguistic independence. The fear that the choice of RP as a teaching model will make Nigerians scund like Southern Bristish has not been supported by the results of teaching so far with the few exceptions noted.

However, it would be equally unrealistic to set up standards which are not followed. There is above all the need for a change in attitude and priorities. After a decade of fashionable socio-linguistic distraction, nothing useful has sipped into the English classroom in Nigeria. There is hardly any manual or handbook on Nigerian pronunciation and usage. Worse still, the distinction between what is the result of bad teaching and/or poor learning, and, therefore, outrightly faulty, and that which represents linguistic creativity is much blurred to day.

5.0 Recommendations

1. English Professionals: The English profession in Nigeria especially needs to focus attention on the classroom and especially on improved classroom teacher and student talk, creative ways of teaching speaking skills, especially stress, intonation, rhythm, and assimilation. It may have to devote some of its publications to the teaching of speech generally, arrange workshops to this end, provide leadership in the design of teacher education programmes in English, set certification standards, and strongly support the establishment of Institutes of English and Resource Centres in the nineteen States.
2. Teacher Training: Teacher training institutions must intensify the teaching of speech for snowball effect and instil a more serious-minded attitude to English. Only trainees with language aptitude and high potentials for success in English teaching as well as an integrative attitude to the language and culture need to be encouraged to make English teaching a profession. Since English is the national language of the country and the medium of instruction at all levels, it is imperative that all teachers be required to attain an adequate level of intelligibility, e.g. as set out by Gimson(1980:307-115) before taking up teaching appointments.

3. Tertiary Education: There is need to extend the recommendation made in the last sentence of (2) above to all of the tertiary level of education. It is indeed ironic that American universities should make a one-year requirement in English for native speakers, while Nigerians, to whom English is a second language, fail to see the need for this.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that our profession has over the last decade been diverted from its main task of English teaching by such matters as local varieties of English, which may be sociolinguistically interesting but which have not been of much help to the classroom teacher. Experts are sending out conflicting signals. On the one hand, English users in developing countries are said to lack adequate intelligibility, and on the other hand, teachers are being advised to teach those same unintelligible varieties and thereby perpetuate a vicious cycle. A more realistic stance would be to strive to teach RP more effectively for its very many motivational advantages. Clearly, Nigerians appreciate it most of all, though they may speak something else. Its neutrality among the mother-tongue based varieties, as the neutrality of the whole of the English language itself in Nigeria, recommends it. Although its choice as a non-ambiguous starting point does not in any way guarantee native-

like attainment, it challenges both teacher and student alike and may lead to some minimum Pygmalion effect; for as Brumfit (1978:40) argues "only accurate speech will communicate effectively with a wide range of listeners in many different situations." Gimson (1980:303) is even more specific as to how we can attain such intelligibility. We must teach precision in phonetic (allophonic) realization of phonemes and for confident handling of accentual and intonational patterns. To attains this, our profession must focus its energy and resources on the vital problems in the teaching and learning situation, and not be seen to engage in mere shadow boxing. It must strongly advocate the provision of qualitative human and material resources, and deliberately strive to influence the overall quality of speech performance in the educational system.

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APPENDIX

Educated Nigerian English: Some Examples

Pronunciation

1. Vowels

English vowels and dipthongs are more problematic than consonants since there are only about seven vowels in most Nigerian languages for the twenty in English.

Examples

1. Failure to distinguish between long and short vowels as in:

hit - heat; had - hard;

pack - park; spot - sports, etc.

Invariably, the short vowel is used for both sets.

2. Absence of central vowels leads to the substitution of these with the low back /ɔ/ in some words and the half-open front /e/ in others.

Examples

fest or fost	for	first
bed or board	for	bird
/dɔktɔ/	for	/dɔktə/
/neitɔ/	for	/neitə/
/kɔltʃɔ/	for	/kʌltʃə/
/kɔp/	for	/kʌp/
/dʒɔnI/	for	/dʒɜ:nI/

3. Spelling pronunciation

(a) leading to diphthongization of monophthongs

Examples

The underlined syllables are given/full value in pronunciation rather than weak or complete elision.

bagg<u>age</u>	/-eid$_3$/	for	/-id$_3$/
langu<u>age</u>	/-eid$_3$/	for	/-id$_3$/
immedi<u>ate</u>	/-eit/	for	/ət/
practic<u>ally</u>	/-kəli/	for	/-kli/
educati<u>onal</u>	/-nəl/	for	/nl/

<u>a</u>go /eIgəu/ for /əgəu/; <u>a</u>lone /eiləun/ for /*ələun/

(b) Giving the letter e the sound /e/ as in <u>get</u> in almost all positions because it has this sound in some words but more so because it has this sound in Nigerian languages.

Examples of the use of /e/ for /i/

<u>e</u>xamination,	<u>e</u>nhance, <u>e</u>ffect
r<u>e</u>sponsibility,	w<u>a</u>nted, pr<u>e</u>sented
hop<u>e</u>less,	good<u>n</u>ess
mark<u>e</u>t;	b<u>u</u>cket

*In addition many Nigerian vowels may be accompanied by strong nasality.

2. Consonants

English sounds not existing in Nigerian languages are often substituted for by the nearest ones from Nigerian languages.

(a) Speakers of Southern languages, largely Kwa languages, substitute /t/ for /θ/ and /d/ for /ð/, while speakers of Northern languages, largely Chadic, substitute /s/ for /θ/ and /z/ for /ð/.

Thus: tink and think

sink and think

dose and those

boarder and bother, etc

may not be differentiated.

Other substitutions are:

/kp/ or /f/ for /p/ as in people

/ʃ/ (sh) for /tʃ/ (ch) as in church teach, and each.

/f/ or /b/ for /v/ as in five, fever, never, etc.

/ʃ/ sh for /ʒ/ as in measure, pleasure, and leisure.

Kw and gw before /ɔ/, /u/ and /əu/ for /k/ and /g/ as in contract and government

(b) Difficulty in selecting the correct voiced or voiceless sound after a final voiced or voiceless consonant.

(i) the use of /d/ instead of /t/ in helped, stopped, cooked, liked, etc.

(ii) the use of /s/ for /z/ in girls, boys, has, goes, does, news, etc.

Suprasegmentals

1. The use of mother-tongue tones, syllable timing, rhythm as well as heavy nasal colouring of vowels on English words, especially noticeable in the English of Southern Nigeria.

2. Non-Standard English stress patterns.

(a) prefixes and suffixes are stressed

enjoy, enable, comfortable, remarkable, handful, lawlessness, conducted.

(b) verbs ending in -ify or -ate are stressed where in British English the stress seems to fall regularly on the syllable preceding it.

Examples

Nigerian English	British English
Satis'fy	'Satisfy
speci'fy	'specify
clari'fy	'clarify
activ'ate	'activate
gradu'ate	'graduate

(c) In words ending in -able and -atory, the Nigerian stress tends to be on the third syllable from the end.

Examples

Nigerian English	British English
com'parable	'comparable
re'parable	'reparable
trans'ferable	'transferable
expla'natory	ex'planatory

(d) In the following words, the Nigerian stress tends to be on the third syllable from the end.

Nigerian English	British English
~~cri~~'bicism	'criticism
jour'nalism	'journalism
nation'nalism	'nationalism

Assimilation

1. John Laver (1968) has compared the assimilation found in Nigerian English with that of educated Scots.

Examples

gɛb bak	get back
mɛgdɛm	make them
blag b :d ɪ	black bird

2. There is also a tendency not to assimilate at all as each word is given full value in what has been described as "bookish English."

Syntax

Only very few examples are given here since the main concern of this paper has been phonological.

1. The use of the reflexive pronouns for 'each other' as in
   (a) You know yourselves, I suppose (that is, I don't think you need to be introduced to each other.)
   (b) We ran into ourselves at Agidingbi.
   (We ran into each other)
   (c) They started fighting themselves.
2. The tendency to use the demonstrative "that" or "this" with "your"/"their"/"our" as determiners as in
   (a) That your card, who are you sending it to?
   (b) This your car looks quite new.
   (c) This our lecturer.....
   (d) That their party.....
3. The tendency to use "isn't it" as a generalized tag question for many different forms.
   (a) We've discussed this before, isn't it?
   (b) You're looking for John, isn't it?
4. Tendency to use the non-completive aspect in place of the simple present tense.
   (a) We are hoping to get more funds.
   (b) The teacher should try and be writing some of the responses on the board.

5. Referential meaning defies explanation or as Kirk-Greene (1971) puts it, "the reader may not see the sentential words for the lexical trees."

(a) You are our wife. (Said to a woman married to one's tribesman or another Nigerian, i.e. 'You are now one of us')

(b) I met your absence AND

(c) You were not on seat.

(Both meaning I couldn't find you in your office.)

(d) Well done! (as part of normal greeting.)